

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-5 and 8-16 are pending in the present application. Claims 1 and 8 are amended and Claims 6 and 7 are cancelled by the present response. Withdrawn Claims 17-20 are also cancelled. Support for amendments to the claims can be found in the claims as originally filed. Thus, no new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-6, 9 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Kitano et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,537,373, “Kitano”) in view of Katsumi (JP 01-236967); Claim 11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Kitano and Katsumi in view of Yoshihara et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,527,860, herein “Yoshihara”); Claims 12-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Kitano and Katsumi in view of Matsuda et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,494,220, herein “Matsuda”); Claim 16 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Kitano, Katsumi, Matsuda and Yoshihara; and Claims 7 and 8 were objected to as depending on a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Initially, Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication of the allowable subject matter in Claims 7 and 8. In response, Applicants have cancelled Claim 7 and intervening Claim 6 and incorporated the features of these claims into independent Claim 1.

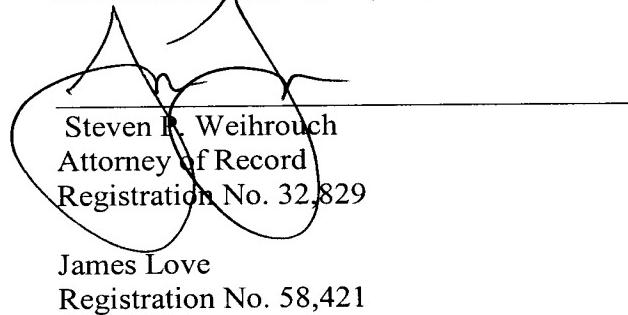
Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Kitano and Katsumi is moot and respectfully request that the rejections of Claim 1 and Claims 2-5 and 8-16 depending therefrom under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) based on various combinations of Kitano, Katsumi, Matsuda and Yoshihara be withdrawn.

Moreover, Applicants have cancelled withdrawn Claims 17-20 in order to enable the present application to pass to allowance.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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